

Dr. C. Everett Koop Speech at the White House

There is no prepared copy of this speech. The date of its delivery is unknown, and the venue is also unknown. I can speculate on all of these things. From time to time, President Reagan asked me to come to the Old Executive Building and address one group or another that either he had invited for a specific purpose or which had confronted him rather unexpectedly and I was asked to come and address them on the particular subject of their concern. This is one such delivery.

The venue was often the Indian Treaty Room in the Old Executive Office Building. More often than not, he came and opened the meeting and introduced me. There are pictures showing President Reagan at the lectern and Koop sitting behind him and others showing Koop at the lectern and President Reagan sitting behind him. More often than not, after the President introduced me he left.

I can also speculate on the group. It was obviously a pro-life group, one interested in not only the problem of abortion, but also in proper compassionate treatment of women who were pregnant and did not wish to be, as well as their expected offspring. The group was also Christian oriented and believed in the authority of the bible. More than that, I cannot say, except that it is obvious from my remarks that this was more or less the keynote of a day in which they would be hearing much more about the subjects of abortion and adoption.

I think this speech should be included in the archive for several reasons. First of all, it is an example of historic fact, which took place on a number of occasions at the specific invitation of the President to the then Surgeon General designee awaiting confirmation. The user may not agree with the point of view expressed in this speech, but he cannot deny that everything in it is truthfully and fairly presented.

For the historian, I think it is important for several reasons: it gives a pretty clear overview of the day, in reference to some of the pro-life issues; it is prophetic in that it predicts the domino effect of abortion on infanticide on euthanasia that time has proved to be accurate; it foretells the involvement of faith-based institutions in the social issues of the day, which Mr. Reagan referred to as the "Safety Net". The second President Bush has most ardently pursued this latter proposition.

Although it is said in the archive, it is appropriate at this point to remind the user of something he/she probably does not know. President Ronald Reagan was one of the few presidents who wrote a book while he was in office. The book was entitled, "Abortion and The Conscience of a Nation". The book had three chapters and two co-authors in addition to the President. The first chapter, written by the President, was on abortion. The second chapter, written by me, was on infanticide, and the third chapter, written by Malcolm Muggeridge, was on euthanasia. This was an unbelievable best seller, which never made a best-seller list, to my knowledge. If you doubt that there is a conspiracy among publishers, editors, and those who would like to suppress knowledge, consider this. No matter who wrote the book, what it said was of interest to the

public, but it was made difficult to obtain. No matter what the content might have been, the fact that the President of the United States was one of the authors was a selling point in itself. I know of instances where large quantities of the book were purchased retail and destroyed, rather than let them fall into the hands of the public. The whole episode was, in my opinion, an example of the transition from the free and open exchange of ideas no matter how diametrically opposed, and the present situation where, even in universities, political correctness demands lukewarm statements that offend no one.

Inasmuch as I said there was no prepared speech for this occasion, and it's obvious that someone transcribed the speech, it has remained essentially uncorrected and is presented as transcribed and presumably that means as delivered.
